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ABSTRACT

Efforts to analyze a case study of the implementation of Program Planning Budgeting System (PPBS) materials for a pilot study in a school district are discussed from a descriptive, ethnographic approach. Antagonism, anxiety, and accusations characterize the extreme we-they split among those interviewed. Anthropology describes such a society with two major divisions as a moiety, one of two mutually exclusive divisions of a group. The educator community studied exhibits the characteristics of a moiety form of social organization in its two divisions of teachers and technocrats, and their two totems, students and reports respectively. The moiety perspective challenges the hierarchical bureaucratic model of school organization by showing a reasonable distribution of power between moieties. Educator moieties exhibit reciprocal behaviors, such that each division is dependent on the other and cannot maintain a viable educational subculture alone. The traditional subdivision of moieties into phratries and/or clans extends the scope of the analogy, explaining, for example, most teachers seem to find more in common with teachers of the same levels as themselves. Lastly, the moiety notion suggests an equilibrium model for examining educational change and for explaining the stability of the educational subculture in general. (Author/KSM)

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Social Organization and Educational Change:

A Case Study

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Prepared for presentation in the symposium "Anthropological Perspectives in Educational Evaluation," American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 17, 1974.

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When I was doing my initial fieldwork on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia no Kwakiutl man, woman, or child ever came to me to ask, "how good of a Kwakiutl do you think I am." Conversely, I never thought of putting myself in a position to tell one Indian that he was more Kwakiutl than someone else. I liked some of them more than others, but those preferences were personal, not professional judgements.

There is a lesson here. The lesson is that evaluation is <u>not</u> central to the science and art of anthropology. Indeed, basic descriptive ethnography, the facet of cultural anthropology in which I have invested my career, seems to me most effective when it avoids the temptation to be evaluative. We don't insist that ethnographers be neutral, but we do expect them to be objective and to be able to satisfy us that they know the difference between what they <u>observe</u> of human social behavior and what they <u>prefer</u> in it. Thus an anthropological perspective on educational evaluation ought to look more like anthropology than like evaluation, more like a study of human process that asks, "What is going on here?" than an attempt to tell some educators that they are "more educator" than others. I am still swayed by Clyde Kluckhohn's statement made years ago that the meaning of the anthropologist's work is to hold up "a great mirror to man" that lets him "look at himself in his infinite variety" (Kluckhohn 1949:16).

This paper holds a mirror for looking at social organization and educational change. Neither the fieldwork nor the analysis of the case is completed.

Whatever disclaimers I may someday wish to offer, however, I will never deny that my purpose from the very beginning of the study (in January 1973) has been to provide ethnographic description in lieu of educational evaluation.

I do not claim neutrality in my own views toward the project. I am not personally sympathetic to the current fad of educational "accountability" (of which the particular set of materials being developed and researched here is part) nor am I sympathetic toward the manner in which the implementation of the materials for pilot study in this district was imposed upon the teachers. I was faced with the alternative of writing an angry diatribe (which I could have written easily after a couple of months of interviewing and even more easily if I had not done any fieldwork at all) or seeking a way to render a careful ethnographic account of what was going on, regarding everyone involved with the project as an actor in a human social system rather than attributing all the humanity to the group that seemed most put upon. (A recent year of fieldwork in Rhodesia has proven to be valuable experience in that regard--cf. Wolcott 1974a, 1974b.)

I will be intentionally superficial in describing the setting, since my purpose here is to discuss efforts to analyze the case from a descriptive, ethnographic approach without at this stage unintentionally altering the course of events in the on-going study itself.

The development of the materials in question was begun several years ago by educator colleagues at the same R & D Center that houses me. Their intent was to develop a form of PPBS particularly suited to schools, in anticipation

of the probability that schoolmen would be ill prepared to meet the demands of legislation concerning accountability being mandated or discussed in several state legislatures.

Efforts at product development for the educational marketplace are far afield of my interests. I was but vaguely aware of the effort to develop and pilot test this program. What little I did know dealt more with the intensity of the effort and the integrity of the individuals associated with it than of the materials themselves. I did not know how the pilot test was proceeding. At that point where I joined it, the project escalated by adding a separate research component to examine the consequences of implementing a PPA system. The project was heavily oriented toward the development of a set of "instruments" for measuring outcomes. But, in the prevailing climate that allows for the contingency that life is more complex than the carefully-normed instruments by which we measure it, the research "design" also called for conducting a set of field studies. While my colleagues went to work to design their questionnaires, and the developers continued to improve the basic materials, I motored down the freeway to have a look around in the closing months of a 3-year pilot project.

To put it mildly, teacher reaction to the new project was something less than uncontrollable enthusiasm. Had the developers intentionally been failing to report the problems and the stress caused by the introduction of their new materials? That may be true in part, but it is even more likely that in their rush to develop and try out their system, they had failed to elicit what those who were using it really thought of it. My interviewing uncovered many dimensions to the problem and the extent of antagonism, anxiety, and accusation

that characterized the more extreme positions of a sharp "we-they" split.

My initial reaction was to sort out everyone involved in terms of the classical manager-worker dichotomy, or what becomes, in the school setting, the traditional administrator-teacher split. This division seemed to provide a very easy way to sort out everyone employed within the school district. But it was clear that outsiders to the district were very much insiders in terms of the social organization of the change being implemented. It was in trying to accommodate for educators who were neither administrators nor teachers, and specifically to locate my own R & D colleagues within the social system, that set the scene for my anthropological breakthrough.

The "we-they" dichotomy seemed appropriate--one teacher even referred to the split as "the black hats and the white hats"--but it had to be sufficiently encompassing to accommodate educators external to the school district. Further, although I had more personal sympathy for the "done to" than the "doers," I was looking for a perspective that would facilitate an examination of the way every individual involved was probably acting consistently with ideas shared by other members of his side of the controversy. Since I was privy to the dialogs held by parties to each side, I was aware of some important differences in the ideational codes shared within each group but differing between them.

I might have taken the perspective that the division I saw represented two distinct cultures or subcultures, but to do so meant that I had to ignore the extensive sharing of beliefs among all professional educators. Their "big" purposes and goals are the same; the friction I was observing related to procedures for accomplishing purposes, not to purposes themselves. Thus my problem was to describe the social organization of a people who seemed at once

to share a common culture and yet to be divided within it. Let me also stress that my assignment to study change brought me to this examination of social organization. I do not suggest that the implementation produced the organization, it merely made it easier to identify.

As students of social organization know, anthropology was ready to supply me with the precedent and the terminology for describing a society (like this educator one) consisting of two major divisions. The basic concept is that of the moiety, from a French word meaning "half." In anthropology, a moiety is one of two mutually exclusive divisions of a group (Keesing 1958:4[illegible]). Most often, moieties are unilineal and exogamous kin groups into which a tribe or community is divided. Sometimes, however, they are not kinship groups at all, and membership is determined in some other way (cf. Driver 1969:247).

Clearly I am not referring to social groups based on kinship in my proposal here that the educator community exhibits the characteristics of a moiety form of social organization. Anthropologist G. P. Murdock has suggested the term pseudo-moiety for divisions not based on reference to descent groups;* I

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*"Social units that simulate kin groups but are not based upon a rule of descent, e.g., the pseudo-moieties of some tribes that live on opposite sides of a village square or oppose one another in games, and whose membership is determined on some non-kinship basis, must not be confused with genuine unilinear kin groups, even if non-exogamous types" (Murdock 1949:47).

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might be equally tentative by inviting you to consider the moiety-like organization of the educator community. I hope I can stave off the inevitable caution--that we ought only to introduce new terms when they make a geniune contribution to our understanding--by suggesting the progress and problems I am having

with the moiety concept as a heuristic for looking at the human organization of professional educators.

First, identifying the two divisions within the educator community. It is clear that teachers constitute the essence of one moiety, by far the larger of the two divisions in terms of numbers. Looking at the types remaining in the education subculture when the teachers are assigned to one moiety, a seemingly disparate collection of principals, superintendents, central office personnel, professors of education, developers, researchers, and state and federal officials, viewed collectively, coalesce as a moiety of technocrats,*

*The term technocrat was suggested by an earlier fieldworker as a descriptive label for examining the role of the school superintendent in the district.

educators deeply involved with the processes of formal education but not usually involved with the processes of teaching. The fact that the assignment of certain personnel to one of the two moiety divisions causes me some problems has been slightly disconcerting but the problems seem nicely sensitive to the actual human scene. For example:

(a) I was inclined to find myself rooting for and identifying with the teachers as the underdogs of the situation, but the moiety system clearly places me, as a researcher, among the technocrats striving to do what technocrats do, "bring order out of chaos." I am now quite attentive to regarding members of my own moiety as thoughtfully and humanely as I treat those of the teacher group (cf. Wolcott 1971).

(b) Unlike the rigid distinction required by the manager-worker dichotomy, the moiety system accommodates for individual differences and proclivities. Thus,

central office personnel in most districts tend to be technocrats, but there may be one or more individuals among them who maintain a primary identification with teachers and teaching rather than with system management; they retain membership in the teacher moiety. So, too, some university types remain oriented to the pressing concerns of the classroom teacher rather than to American education "writ large." Conversely, there probably are budding technocrats among the teaching ranks who are only serving time in classrooms until they have an opportunity to exercise their ambitions elsewhere in the system.

(c) The moiety division provides a fascinating prespective on the role of the principal; a role long touted for being "in the middle," because a moiety division knows no middle. Distinctions that principals themselves make (cf. Wolcott 1973) suggest that elementary school principals tend to identify with the teacher moiety, secondary principals with technocrats, but the case study suggests that principals must be sorted on an individual basis. The lack of stereotyping might rest comfortably on principals of either persuasion; the possibility that there is no such position as that of "middleman" raises a host of issues for consideration.

Second, moieties are traditionally associated with totems, like the "Raven" and "Wolf" of the Tlingit. Identifying a totem equivalent for the technocrats presents no problem--it is clearly the report.*

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*The 30 page single spaced roster of report-givers in the 1974 A. E. R. A. Annual Program prepared for this meeting provides adequate testimony for the centrality of reporting in the technocrat moiety.

The totem of the teacher moiety is the student. The problem with having such a totem is that it lacks the easy transportability and definitiveness of

the technocrat's ubiquitous report--you can't xerox a student, footnote him, or mail ten of him off to Washington to fulfill the obligations of a grant. Teachers are forever frustrated with the ambivalence of their relationship toward their totem; at once they can't wait for Friday and hope to affect eternity.

It is of interest to note how the difference in totems epitomizes the very source of stress inherent in this case study. The members of one moiety are imposing the value of their totem on members of the other--they are trying to create report-makers out of them, to solve problems teachers don't have with a form of record keeping they don't want. In the pilot district I have never talked with a teacher who did not complain about the lengthy processes of documentation and record keeping required by the new system, time that detracts from what they perceive to be their critical duties as classroom teachers. They might take some satisfaction in knowing that, like all other moieties, their totem is drawn from the world of nature. It does not seem entirely coincidental that the totem of the technocrats is not.

Third, the moiety perspective challenges the hierarchical bureaucratic model of school organization, and I think the model warrants challenging. Power tends to be hierarchical, it is true, but even common sense argues that there is more than one hierarchy in a school building or school district. Tentatively, I am examining the case that argues that there is a reasonable distribution of power between moieties. I believe I will be able to show that each moiety can exert sufficient influence vis-a-vis the other to hold its own.

Here is another advantage gained from the tradition of anthropological research--sticking around long enough to find out what is really going on. The implementation is now in its fourth year: the pilot study is complete, the developers have, for the most part, left the scene. And yet now, after all these years of patiently trying to work with materials, feeling themselves put-upon by administrators and university alike, and even realizing that the hardest part, initiating the implementation, is completed--NOW the teachers have brought the implementation to a standstill through what in education is euphemistically known as a "moratorium." I wonder if we have not confused the speed and efficiency with which a relatively small number of technocrats are able to get things initiated with the awesome power that probably resides with some two million American teachers? The question remains open.

Fourth, like their traditional conterparts, these educator moieties exhibit other reciprocal behaviors. That is, each division is dependent on the other, and neither could exist alone and maintain a viable education sub-culture. Teachers don't want their classrooms managed but they do not want to manage educational systems; technocrats are prepared to manage teachers but they do not want to perform teaching functions. Each moiety is also called upon in the initiation and socialization of members of the opposite one. Technocrats generally monitor the training and credentialing of initiates to the teacher moiety. Teachers socialize new and experienced technocrats with a constantly expanding repertoire of controlling behaviors, ranging from techniques that would impress a Ghandi to those that would make even The Prince envious.

The issue of recruitment puts the moiety perspective to some test. Membership into either group clearly is achieved by intent and effort rather than

ascribed by birth. Further, the system as I have described it necessitates a degree of moiety switching. Again, moieties have been reported in the literature that provide a prototype for both of these rather unusual circumstances. The fact that recruitment into the technocrat moiety is usually made from the teacher group may unduly stretch the analogy. However, I have suggested that incipient technocrats may simply put in time in the teacher ranks; there is evidence that decisions to "go on into administration" are made early in the careers of educators. Conversely, technocrats are not recruited solely from teacher ranks. Teachers take almost fiendish delight in hurling the charge that a professor, researcher, or developer has never been in the classroom. Although it was not true, the accusation that the developers of the new materials "must never have spent a day teaching" was an effective rallying cry for teachers.

Fifth, the traditional subdivisions of moieties into phratries and/or clans can extend the scope of the analogy. Although a few instances during the fieldwork could be characterized as a dramatic showdown between moieties, members of each moiety more frequently behaved in ways to suggest the presence of sub-units with which they felt much closer identification. Elementary and high school teachers, for example, seem to find far more in common with teachers at the same level as themselves. Central office personnel can go along with R & D types just so long before they have to get back to the "realities" of operating a school system, and I have discovered that I have much more in common with fellow researchers than with developers. Social organization has anticipated these distinctions that human beings like to make.

Sixth, and last, the moiety notion suggests a kind of equilibrium model for examining educational change and a plausible explanation for the remarkable and largely unheralded stability of the education subculture. The extent of internal checks and balances within education apparently satisfies most local communities, and schools generally are left to go their own way alone. In the case study, teachers and technocrats alike seemed to share the belief that their differences were an internal matter, and any hint of a violation of this unwritten code has been regarded angrily on either side.

Internally, the problems that the developers and administrators had with this particular implementation seem to fit the classic pattern that finds schools tomorrow pretty much as they were today. The moiety analogy suggests a possible explanation: the efforts of the developers went largely to improve the effectiveness of only one moiety, the technocrats. Resources were literally poured into the district, and those resources temporarily upset the delicate balance of power. Through cumbersome trial and error methods, teachers worked to restore that balance; the implementation itself took second place to that critical regaining of equilibrium. One cannot help but wonder how the implementation would have gone if concerted effort had been given to maintaining the balance rather than attempting to upset it. Maybe that's too slick an explanation, but my wondering is genuine.

Unlike my Kwakwala- or Bantu-speaking friends, the educators I meet in their professional roles--teachers, administrators, developers, and other researchers alike--almost invariably confront me at some point during fieldwork with the question, "How am I doing?" The anthropology of education will, I think, be coming of age when we learn to counter with a response intended to

be both conclusive and compassionate: "Funny you should ask!"

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